

REMARKS

This Amendment and Response is filed in connection with a Request for Continued Examination and in response to the Final Office Action mailed on November 13, 2007. The Applicant expresses his appreciation for the Examiner's time in an interview conducted on Jan. 11, 2008. Please amend the above-identified patent application as follows.

Claims 1-10 were amended, no claims are canceled; as a result, claims 1-10 are now pending in this application.

§103 Rejection of the Claims

Claims 1-10 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over the 1997 Broadcast of "Schindler's List" on NBC in view of Matheny et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,766,524; hereinafter "Matheny"), and further in view of Blackletter et al. (U.S. Patent No. 7,103,904).

The Final Office Action contended that the previously submitted limitation of, "...at a predetermined time and without requiring viewer action, sending said stored embedded information and viewer information to a remote computer to allow said remote computer to construct said viewing record..." is taught/suggested by the Matheny. Specifically, the Office Action referenced Figures 2 and 4 of Matheny as teaching this limitation.

Applicant has amended the pending claims to include, in general, the limitation, "...viewer information including a user identifier and information indicative of an amount of time the viewer spent watching a sponsored broadcast, wherein the collected viewer information is not collected in response to prompted viewer feedback provided by the viewer as part of viewer participation in an interactive reward program." (emphasis added). In particular, Claim 1 includes the following limitation:

"...collecting viewer information including a user identifier and information indicative of an amount of time the viewer spent watching a sponsored broadcast, wherein the collected viewer information is not collected in response to prompted viewer feedback provided by the viewer as part of viewer participation in an interactive reward program;

sending said stored embedded information and viewer information to a remote computer to allow said remote computer to construct said viewing record..."
(Emphasis Added)

Matheny is directed at a system and method for encouraging viewers to watch television programs. As described in Matheny,

...viewers are notified that they can receive frequent-flier miles for answering one or more simple questions at the conclusion of the commercial. To verify that the viewer paid attention to the commercial, the answer to the question may be based on the content of the commercial. A sponsor might ask, for example, that the viewer identify the name of the sponsor or the color of an announcer's shirt. A correct answer indicates that the viewer watched the commercial, and that the viewer is therefore entitled to some reward... (Matheny Abstract) (emphasis added).

In other embodiments, viewers need not provide a "correct" answer, but may be rewarded for merely participating in the interactive program. Such participation may include selecting an icon with a pointing device, pressing one or more buttons on a remote control, or sending an email message to a location identified in the program. (Matheny Col. 2, lines 11-17) (emphasis added).

In accordance with the invention, broadcaster 205 notifies viewers of television set 235 that they may be rewarded for paying attention to a current or upcoming program, typically a commercial. Later, viewers are presented a question, the answer to which is based upon the content of the program. Viewers that provide the correct answer are entitled to the reward. The identities of viewers who provide correct answers to the question are therefore forwarded to server 220, within which is maintained a database of viewers and corresponding earned entitlements. (Matheny Col. 2, lines 55-65) (emphasis added)

The possibility of receiving a reward will entice some viewers to claim rewards without bothering to watch the associated commercial. Thus, in accordance with one embodiment of the invention, viewers must provide some feedback to indicate that they watched the commercial before they are entitled to a reward. In the example of FIG. 2, set-top box 245 presents the viewer with a test question 265 at or near the end to the commercial. The question is based upon the content of the commercial, so viewers who watch the commercial are able to answer the question correctly. In the example depicted as a subsequent video frame 266 of television 235, a reward query 265 prompts the viewer with a query 269 asking the viewer to enter the previously displayed cruise destination into a form field 270. Entering the correct answer in field 270 entitles a viewer to the offered reward. (Matheny Col. 3, lines 14-30) (emphasis added)

Broadcasters may wish to pose questions for which there are no correct

answers. For example, a sponsor may wish to ask survey questions. The invention may be adapted to provide rewards to viewers who answer such questions. Further, some viewers may find filling in blanks too cumbersome; thus, other embodiments employ simpler test methods (e.g., multiple-choice or true/false), or reward viewers for merely participating in interactive programs. Such participation may include selecting an icon with a pointing device or pressing one or more buttons on a remote control. Still other embodiments may demand more information from a viewer, such as by prompting the viewer to send an email message to a location identified in the program, and possibly by requiring the viewer fill out an electronic form. (Matheny Col. 3, lines 31-45) (emphasis added)

As these passages from Matheny indicate, Matheny is directed at a system and method that requires some sort of viewer feedback as part of the reward validation and fulfillment process. As described in Matheny, “viewers must provide some feedback to indicate that they watched the commercial before they are entitled to a reward”. As such, Matheny is designed and implemented to require such prompted viewer feedback from the viewer as part of viewer participation in an interactive reward program. No such prompted viewer feedback is required in the invention claimed herein. This distinguishing limitation of the present invention is captured in amended claim 1, for example as, “wherein the collected viewer information is not collected in response to prompted viewer feedback provided by the viewer as part of viewer participation in an interactive reward program”. This limitation is not taught or suggested in Matheny. In fact as clearly set forth in the passages of Matheny set forth above, Matheny teaches that the identities of viewers who provide correct answers to the question are therefore forwarded to server 220, within which is maintained a database of viewers and corresponding earned entitlements. Thus, without prompted viewer feedback, Matheny doesn’t even store viewer identities in its database of those viewers have not provided valid feedback. Such a teaching in Matheny is directed away from the presently claimed invention that does not require such prompted viewer feedback. Therefore, Matheny does not teach or suggest the invention presently claimed in amended claim 1. Similar limitations can be found in Claims 2-10 as amended herein.

Applicant had previously amended the claims to include the limitation, “...the embedded information including information indicative of one or more sponsors of the broadcast. As provided in the currently amended claims, the information embedded in the broadcast includes

information indicative of one or more sponsors of the broadcast. Matheny teaches no such system. Matheny describes triggers and reward templates; but, doesn't mention including sponsor information as embedded with the broadcast (e.g. in the VBI).

Blackketter is offered as a description of advertising templates that may include sponsor names. However, Blackketter does not describe or suggest the presently claimed system and method wherein the collected viewer information is not collected in response to prompted viewer feedback provided by the viewer as part of viewer participation in an interactive reward program. As such, Blackketter alone or in combination with Matheny does not render obvious the presently claimed invention.

Applicant continues to assert that the previously submitted claims with the limitations including, "without commercial interruption" distinguish over Matheny, the 1997 Broadcast of "Schindler's List" on NBC, and all other art of record. However, the claims have been amended herein to further distinguish the claimed invention from the art of record as detailed above.

Therefore, Applicant respectfully submits that at least for the reasons set forth above, independent claim 1 is allowable. In addition, because claims 2-10 present similar limitations as in claim 1 as argued above, Applicant submits that at least for the same reasons set forth above, claims 2-10 are also allowable and thus their rejections should be withdrawn. As such, claims 1-10 as amended herein are patentable over Matheny, the 1997 Broadcast of "Schindler's List" on NBC, Blackketter, and the other art of record. The Applicant respectfully requests withdrawal of the § 103(a) rejections.

Applicant therefore respectfully requests withdrawal of the pending rejections and allowance of the pending claims.

CONCLUSION

Applicant respectfully submits that the claims are in condition for allowance, and notification to that effect is earnestly requested. The Examiner is invited to telephone Applicant's attorney, Jim H. Salter at 408-406-4855 to facilitate prosecution of this application.

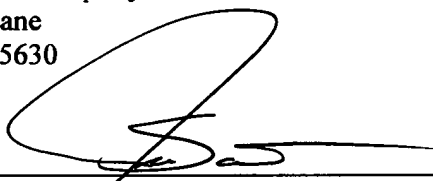
Respectfully submitted,

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Date Jan. 12, 2008

By 
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CERTIFICATE UNDER 37 CFR 1.8: The undersigned hereby certifies that this correspondence is being deposited with the United States Postal Service with sufficient postage as first class mail, in an envelope addressed to: Mail Stop RCE, Commissioner of Patents, P.O. Box 1450, Alexandria, VA 22313-1450 on this 12th day of January 2008.

Jim H. Salter

Name


Signature